

A-8 Friday, October 18, 1985 The Honolulu Advertiser \*\*

# 'Mahu' dispute divides Molokai

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ty's hiring of the gays during the summer.

"I began getting complaints from parents who asked how can we hire people like that," he said.

"I think I have a right and a responsibility as an employer to look at the qualifications, the attitudes and the lifestyle of who gets hired," he said. "I will take a good hard look at the situation."

It's not clear whether Tavares is reversing himself on the hiring of known homosexuals, but it is clear his position has hardened because of the beauty pageant dispute.

The dispute began when Tavares said the county would not issue a park-use permit to hula instructor Billy Kaaihue for a carnival planned for Oct. 31 to Nov. 3 on the Kaunakakai ballpark. Tavares said he had no objections to the carnival, but he would not allow the proposed gay beauty pageant. He said the pageant was unwholesome and inappropriate for a county facility.

Kaaihue said he was shocked at the county's position. He had been granted a building permit for booths and a stage for the

carnival and pageant in July. When he was told the county would not allow use of the ball park, he said, he and parents involved in his hula halau tried to talk to the mayor. Kaaihue said he called the mayor's office, while several parents wrote to Tavares seeking to meet with him.

Tavares said he never received any messages from Kaaihue, although he acknowledged he personally never tried to talk to Kaaihue to explain his position.

For years, Molokai has been known as a community that accepted its known homosexual population. Only newcomers were sometimes surprised at finding an openly flagrant "mahu," usually a man dressed as a woman.

Possibly the best known such homosexual on Molokai, Butchie Dudoit, last year was presented with the annual Aloha Spirit award from the Molokai Chamber of Commerce for doing volunteer work, including work with several county and state programs.

It's all been changed with the simmering fight over the attempt to ban the gay pageant, Dudoit said.

"On our island the mahus were accepted. There were no

hard feelings. Everybody was nice to one another. Even the church people accepted us," Dudoit said.

But now, there is a tension and "even the local people started shying away from us," Dudoit said. "It's creating a conflict on the island."

Dudoit emphasized that he doesn't object to Kaaihue's efforts to raise money for his halau. "I want him to make a lot of money for his trip."

Several others said the pageant itself caused a problem because it spotlighted folks who were otherwise a low-key and accepted part of the community. It made the homosexuals appear to be "freaks," several said. Notably, after Kaaihue announced his plans, only one person from Molokai entered the pageant. Nine of the contestants were from Honolulu.

The fires of the dispute have been fanned by some of the Christian churches on Molokai. One particularly vituperative letter allegedly sent by a minister warned that the homosexuals or transvestites being brought over from Oahu would carry the AIDS virus with them to Molokai.

Tavares said his position was not influenced by the Christian group. He said he made his

decision before the ministers began sending letters out.

In his effort to stop the pageant, he said he is sending a copy of a letter to Kaaihue to every household on Molokai, asking Kaaihue to not hold the gay beauty pageant. His letter says it would be more appropriate to put on performances of the hula halau on the stage.

Kaaihue said he got the letter yesterday, but said it is too late, with his pageant scheduled in just two weeks. There also is the factor that his case has been taken to federal District Court, where he is being represented by ACLU attorneys challenging the mayor's decision to prohibit the pageant.

An attorney representing Kaaihue said the civil rights case in federal court also is aimed at protecting Molokai's gays against future discrimination.

As it turns out, Tavares yesterday agreed that would be his intention. "I respect the rights of the minority, but I have to listen to the majority," he said.

He said the issue of "mahus" working for the county "was never brought to my attention before. But now people are questioning me about the county hiring so-called mahus."

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## Gay dispute stirs change on Molokai

By Edwin Tanji  
Advertiser Maui County Bureau

KAUNAKAKAI — A simmering dispute over a "Miss Gay Molokai" pageant has spilled over to threaten the status of a number of Molokai's gays who make no secret of their sexual orientation and have been treated, up till now, as up-standing members of the community.

Mayor Hannibal Tavares said yesterday he will reconsider the county's past hiring practices on Molokai because of complaints he has received about "so-called mahus" since he banned a permit for the gay beauty pageant.

For at least the past four years, several of the homosex-



**Mahu Tavares**  
Taking "hard look at situation"

uals have been hired for the Molokai Summer Fun program. Tavares said he's been receiving calls of support for his position on the gay pageant and also complaints about the coun-

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